

Saskatchewan's independent newsmagazine

BRIARPATCH

Volume 28, Number 10

December 1999 / January 2000

\$3.00

SASKATCHEWAN POLITICS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT



Climate Change

**The Poetry
of Poverty**

RALLY AGAINST POVERTY

About 50 people, including a large group of high school students, rallied against poverty in Regina on October 15. The event, sponsored by the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, commemorated World Food Day and International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Various anti-poverty speakers voiced their concerns that none of the mainstream political parties made poverty an issue in the provincial election.

MEANWHILE IN THE U.S.

According to an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, "The U.S. has 32 million people with a life expectancy of less than 60 years; 40 million without medical coverage; 45 million living below the poverty line; and 52 million who cannot read or write."

BOYCOTT BACARDI

Bacardi, the rum company whose assets were seized by the Cuban government in the 1960s, helped draft the Helms-Burton Act, which extends the U.S. blockade of Cuba to other countries including Canada. Those of you who are rum drinkers and supporters of the Cuban revolution should consider boycotting Bacardi products. Genuine Cuban rum is now available in many parts of Canada.



WANTED

Here's your chance to own a piece of Saskatchewan's history. Back in the 1980s when Grant Devine's Tory government was destroying our province, the Saskatchewan Coalition for Social Justice was helping to lead the fight to kick the Tories out of office. One of their campaigns was to produce WANTED posters of Grant Devine, Eric Berntson, Grant Schmidt, Bob Andrew and Graham Taylor. *Briarpatch* has four complete sets of these limited edition WANTED posters which we will sell to the four highest bidders. Deadline for bids is January 31, 2000. Send your bids to *Briarpatch*, 2138 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK S4P 2R7.

Briarpatch is Saskatchewan's independent alternative newsmagazine committed to building a socialist democratic society. We provide an open forum for disadvantaged peoples and support progressive movements working to change unjust structures and build a genuine political and economic democracy. We support peace, equality, democracy, social justice, Aboriginal self-determination, and the protection of the environment. We oppose the oppression of people on the basis of nation, class, race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation.

BRIARPATCH

DECEMBER 1999 / JANUARY 2000

Volume 28, Number 10

Climate Change Alert.....3

Melting polar ice-sheets could lead to the catastrophe of the new millennium.

by Bruce Torrie

Super Disasters..... 4

When environmental problems of global warming and deforestation combine with social problems like increasing poverty and growing shanty towns, you get a new scale of catastrophe.

Kids Can't Wait.....5

Child care benefits were a major priority for the CAW in its negotiations with the auto-makers.

by George Manz

Locked Out in Moose Jaw..... 7

RWDSU members say no to concession bargaining.

by Darin Milo

The SFL Webcast..... 9

A new media experiment.

by Armand Roy

Saskatchewan Politics from Left to Right.....10

A Briarpatch interview with Lorne Brown, Joe Roberts and Jack Warnock.

by Ormond McKague

Die Grünen, the British Greens, and the New Green Alliance..... 18

Comparing experiences and issues.

by Karl Henriques

Signs of the Times.....22

poem by Bud Osborne

photography by Elaine Brière

Say What?.....31

People say the darndest things.

My Opinion.....32

If Mike "Big Brother" Harris gets his way and issues every citizen of Ontario with a universal provincial ID card, it could result in a society predicted by George Orwell.

by Paul Bobier



Briarpatch magazine was founded in 1973 and is published ten times a year by Briarpatch Inc., an independent non-profit organization. Many of the articles and photographs in Briarpatch are contributed by volunteers. Deadline for the receipt of articles is 45 days preceding publication. Unsolicited contributions will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Briarpatch board of directors or staff. Articles may be reproduced provided proper credits are given. Briarpatch is a member of the Canadian Magazine Publishers Association and the staff are members of RWDSU Local 568. The Briarpatch office is at Huston House, 2138 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK S4P 2R7. Phone (306) 525-2949. One year subscription: \$24.61. Unions & institutions: \$35.31. Publications Mail Registration No. 08152. ISSN 0703-8968. Membership in Briarpatch Inc. is open to groups or individuals upon application and payment of a \$1.00 membership fee. Briarpatch is indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index and Alternative Press Index and available on microform from the Alternative Press Collection, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, U.S.A.



MANAGING EDITOR

George Manz

MAGAZINE DESIGNER

Terry Massey

ADMINISTRATOR

Edith Mountjoy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill Anderson
Cara Banks
John Frederick
Loretta Gerlach
Marie Symes-Grehan
Keith Jeworski
Phillip Johnson
Victor Lau
Denise MacDonald
Ormond McKague
Ruth Millar
Darin Milo
Philip Urschel
Lynda Walker

CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Bobier
Elaine Brière
Karen Charleson
Karl Henriques
Keith Jeworski
Ben Lafontaine
George Manz
Ormond McKague
Darin Milo
Bud Osborne
Dennis Pritchard
Armand Roy
Bruce Torrie
Terry Wolfwood
Pete Zazulak

COVER GRAPHIC

Ben Lafontaine

LETTERS

Dear Briarpatch,

I am writing to ask *Briarpatch* readers' help in collecting and recording examples of shopfloor (or office floor!) activism and militancy in Canada. I have found the many accounts of actual shopfloor action in the *Labor Notes* book, *A Troublemaker's Handbook*, to be very useful and inspiring. But these stories are almost exclusively American. I'd like to get together a collection of Canadian stories that would be of use to union organizers and educators, as well as our counterparts in community organizations.

You could help in two ways. First, if you have been involved in shopfloor actions, please write a short account and forward it to me. Second, if you know of people who have been involved in such actions, or who could spread the word, please pass this message to them. I hope people will treat this like a nice, no-stress chain letter.

Here's what I'm looking for: short, written accounts (between 50 and 250 words long) of shopfloor militancy and organizing used by workers in Canada to solve problems and win victories on the floor. (These accounts could also

be of actions by labour and community coalitions together, or by grassroots community organizations.)

The accounts should include a description of the problem faced or objective identified, how the group or local decided to do what it did, the action that was taken, the results, and any final comments about what was learned by the group or local. Please make sure to include the name of the union or group, local number, and workplace.

If you have photographs, or samples of buttons or other material used to support your action, it would be great to receive them too.

Please spread the word. Your experience, no matter how small it may seem, can serve as inspiration (and ammunition) for others as they work for justice and fair treatment.

All accounts should be sent to me care of the Grain Services Union (ILWU-Canada), 2334 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK S4P 2S2. Fax: (306) 565-3430. E-mail: gsu.paavo@sk.sympatico.ca

Thank you for any assistance you can provide.

Adriane Paavo
Regina, SK

What's an UnStrike?

Members of CAW Local 3000 at 12 Starbucks stores in British Columbia have finally negotiated an agreement with their employer after a month-long "UnStrike." An "UnStrike" is a job action where workers continue to work and get paid, while refusing to stick to the company's dress code. Starbucks employees were wearing what they wanted, including T-shirts that read,

"I didn't have any sick leave so I phoned in dead. Now my boss wants a Coroners' Certificate before I come back to work."

The new two-year contract provides an average 4.7 percent wage increase, as well as improved contract provisions.

The 12 stores are the only unionized ones among the company's 2,200 stores world-wide.

Climate Change Alert

Melting polar ice-sheets could lead to the catastrophe of the new millennium.

by Bruce Torrie

Last March 14, I met with John Topping, president of the prestigious Climate Institute at its offices on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. (Website: www.climate.org)

He told me that top U.S. government scientists now believe there is a distinct possibility that the West Antarctic ice-sheet will collapse some time within the next ten years. Such a collapse into the sea, and subsequent melting, could raise global sea levels by about six metres, or 20 feet.

There seems to be less risk that the much larger East Antarctic ice-sheet - a mass about three-quarters of the size of North America - will also slide into the sea; but if that were to happen, it could raise global sea levels by as much as 200 feet.

The really bad news is that John Topping was not aware, at the time I met him, of some very recent scientific information first presented in a PBS Nova documentary film. The video of that program, titled "Warnings in the Ice," may be ordered from PBS by phone at 1-800-255-9424. Or a transcript of the program can be downloaded from the PBS web-site at www.pbs.org. Go to Science/Nova/Warnings in the Ice.

The most important information conveyed in this PBS program is that volcanoes have begun erupting under

West Antarctica, pumping cubic miles of hot water and mud against the underside of its already critically destabilized ice-sheet.

After John Topping viewed the PBS Nova program, he told me that a rise in sea level of six metres, or 20 feet - which would occur if the West Antarctic ice-sheet were to collapse into the sea and melt - would result in the deaths of an estimated one billion people from the consequent flooding, with another billion to die shortly afterward from exposure, thirst and starvation.

This information is not being released to the general public because the resultant panic could cause a lot of harm - but mainly because no one (not

even the most knowledgeable scientist) can predict with any certainty when (or even if) such a calamitous rise in sea level will occur.

My advice, however, is to take this threat seriously, and keep checking the web-sites of both the Climate Institute and that of The Skies Above Foundation: <http://www.islandnet.com/~skies> for updates on this situation. We will continue to provide the most current reliable information.

Bruce Torrie is executive director of The Skies Above Foundation. He can be reached by phone at (250) 391-9223, by fax at (250) 391-9280, and by e-mail at skies@islandnet.com



Super Disasters

When environmental problems of global warming and deforestation combine with social problems like increasing poverty and growing shanty towns, you get a new scale of catastrophe.

The combination of human-driven climate change and rapidly changing socio-economic conditions will set off chain reactions of devastation leading to super disasters, international aid organizations claim.

"Everyone is aware of the environmental problems of global warming and deforestation on the one hand, and the social problems of increasing poverty and growing shanty towns on the other.

But when these two factors collide, you have a new scale of catastrophe," said Astrid Heiberg, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Over the last six years, the aid organizations have watched the number of people needing their assistance rise from less than half a million to more than five million, Heiberg said.

Last year's season of natural disasters caused more damage than ever before, according to the World Disasters Report 1999, an annual survey of humanitarian trends put out by the federation.

The report indicates that declining soil fertility, drought, flooding and deforestation drove 25 million people from their land and into the shanty

towns of fast-growing cities.

Through an analysis of Hurricane Mitch and the weather phenomena El Niño and La Niña, the report shows a trend toward weather-triggered super disasters.

For example, when the effects of El Niño struck Indonesia, causing the worst drought in 50 years, it set off a chain reaction of crises. The rice crop failed, the price of imported rice quadrupled, the currency dropped by 80 percent, food riots erupted in the capital, Jakarta, and massive forest fires burning out of control in the countryside paralysed parts of the country with a toxic layer of smoke.

Developing countries will be hardest hit by the effects of climate change, environmental degradation and popu-

lation pressures, according to the report. Already, 96 percent of all deaths from natural disasters occur in developing countries.

One billion people are living in the world's unplanned shanty towns and 40 of the 50 fastest-growing cities are located in earthquake zones. An additional ten million people live under constant threat of floods, according to the report.

On the positive side, the report indicates that disaster preparedness is paying off in countries like China. The country has invested \$3.5 billion in flood control over the last 40 years and saved the country \$12 billion in potential losses.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies wants to change the present method of dealing with disasters in order to prevent loss of life and wasting donor funds.

"We have to structure and fund our emergency services internationally, the same way we do domestically. We don't wait until a house catches fire, then raise money for the fire department," said Peter Walker, the federation's director of disaster policy.

This report was originally published in the Environmental News Network.



Kids Can't Wait

Child care benefits were a major priority for the CAW in its negotiations with the auto-makers.

by George Manz

While the mainstream media was pooh-poohing the recent wage gains that CAW-Canada extracted from Ford, DaimlerChrysler and General Motors as being inflationary, they remained largely silent about the family-oriented benefits that were also negotiated.

Jim Stanford, the union's chief economist, says the child care subsidy it negotiated with the auto-makers reflects the demands by the union's members.

"There's been a lot of recognition about how hard it is for parents to juggle work and family," Stanford said.

That's why the union made it a priority for its members to get a subsidy of up to \$2,000 a year for each child aged five and under registered in a licensed, non-profit day care centre or licensed in-home care. The agreement calls for a subsidy of \$10 per child per day for full-time child care, and \$5 a day for part-time care.

When Prime Minister Jean Chrétien called CAW president Buzz Hargrove congratulating him on the tentative collective agreement with Ford, Hargrove took advantage of the opportunity to discuss the union's child care campaign.

When Chrétien suggested that the solution was tax cuts for parents, Hargrove insisted that kids need development services, the stimulation of being with other kids and the challenge of good children's programming,

whether their parents are working inside or outside the home.

The union says 60 percent of mothers who have children under the age of six are in the work-force. Yet more than 90 percent of children in need of child care have no access to regulated facilities. In fact, an estimated 40 percent of two-earner families are trying to manage child care needs by working different shifts so they can look after their kids.

"While collective agreements can push social policy, they can't replace it," Peggy Nash, assistant to CAW president Buzz Hargrove said. That's why the union has launched a national campaign calling on the federal government, working with the provinces, to provide a national child care program so all kids, whether their parents

are union members or not, can get the child care they need. The union has initiated a postcard-signing campaign across the country noting that "Kids Can't Wait" when it comes to child care.

Nash says the union has been lobbying for a national child care system similar to Quebec's model, where parents can get child care for \$5 a day, regardless of income.

While it's not perfect, the Quebec program "shows us it can be done if the political will is there," Nash said.

For more information about how to help lobby the federal government for universal child care, please contact the CAW at 205 Placer Court, Toronto ON M2H 3H9. Phone (416) 497-4110. Or you can fax your MP via www.caw.ca



National child care. Now.

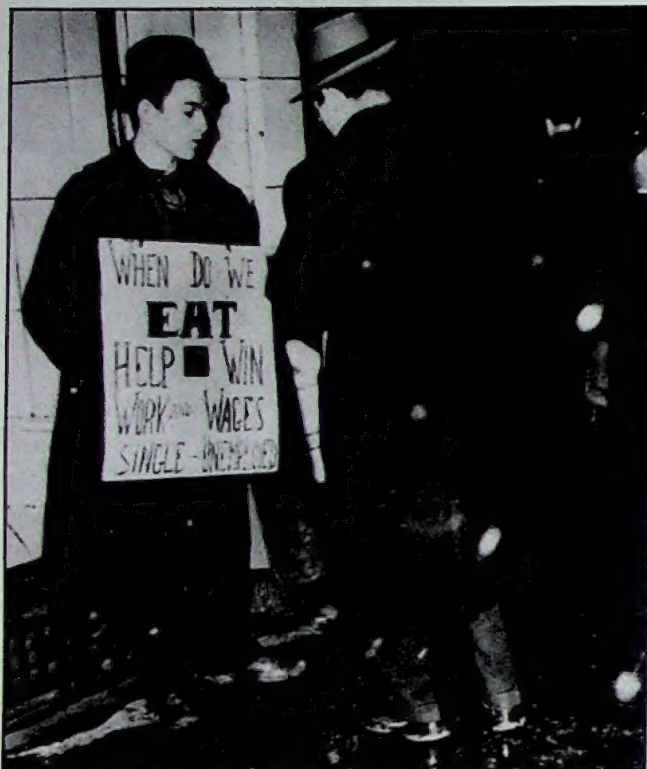
Kids Can't wait.

THE CHILD CARE EXPRESS

Get on board.
Send Ottawa
a message.

CAW TCA
CANADA
www.caw.ca

The CLC's Living Wage Campaign



Snow falls on an unemployed youth, later arrested for begging. Toronto, 1930s.

It doesn't have to be this way. Governments should and can create an environment to ensure jobs for Canadians and provide services that the people of Canada need. We must create enough pressure to force our governments to pass legislation that forbids profitable corporations from shutting down businesses or laying off productive workers.

We must demand more jobs. Workers have a right to earn a living wage.

It pays to organize. Unions do good things for people.

The System Isn't Working

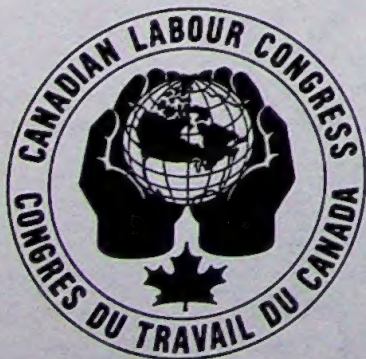
The issues are the same today as they were in the Dirty Thirties. People need jobs! Especially young people who want to enter the work-force.

The problem is there just aren't enough jobs for everybody. That's because corporations are laying off workers by the thousands. Or they're shutting down entire factories and moving production overseas.



Squeegee kids. Vancouver, 1998.

photo: Elaine Brière



Canadian Labour Congress Prairie Region

Locked Out in Moose Jaw



photo: George Manz

Despite being locked out, 190 workers at Tai Wan Pork in Moose Jaw are showing defiance in the face of concession bargaining. RWDSU Local 455 members had come to the bargaining table with the idea of getting modest improvements to their current union contract, but management had other plans.

The company wanted a lower wage scale for newly-hired employees, with current employees retaining their existing wage rates. The company also wanted to roll back vacations, benefits and seniority provisions.

"They want you married to a job which can cause repetitive motion injuries," one shop steward explained. The job can be very physically demanding, but can be made less dangerous when workers switch jobs to help avoid these injuries. He later explained that in Taiwan, workers work all day, six days a week doing the same job over and over, something Moose Jaw workers refuse to emulate.

Even goodwill moves by the union hasn't changed the stalemate. When the big earthquake hit Taiwan earlier this year, the local donated \$1,000 to

the earthquake victims (the country Tai Wan Pork's parent company is from).

The local's bargaining committee offered a \$1 million concession on entry-level unskilled labour. As a sign of good faith, employees worked extra hard instead of taking a strike vote. This resulted in production rising to the highest level it's ever been, but it still wasn't enough.

Despite a failed meeting with a conciliator and being locked out, the rank and file manage to keep morale up on the picket line.

After the workers were locked out, company negotiators wanted their employees to accept 90 percent of the company's contract offer to continue the bargaining process.

"The pork industry always says it's losing money," another shop steward explained, "yet they're tripping over each other to build new plants.

*RWDSU members say
no to concession
bargaining.*

by Darin Milo

They got a \$220 million plant that just opened up in Brandon. Up in Saskatoon, they just announced a \$45 million expansion."

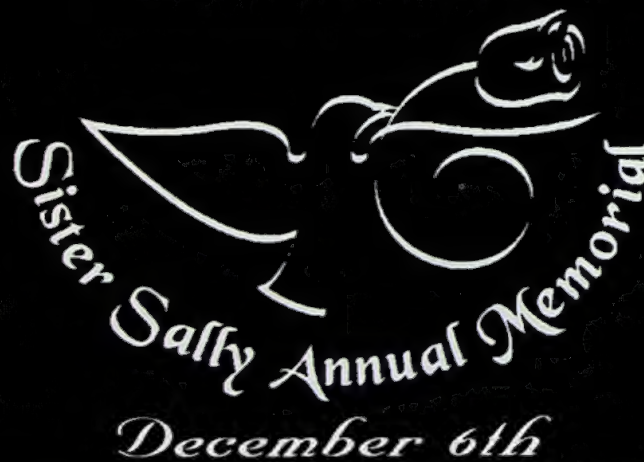
Despite a failed meeting with a conciliator and being locked out, the rank and file manage to keep morale up on the picket line. They have family picnics and fun-day Fridays. The local even had a carwash and BBQ fundraiser for a Moose Jaw mother of four on social assistance whose uninsured house burned down recently.

Because there seems to be no end to the lockout, local members are constructing a small shack to get ready for a long winter on the picket line. The support of local residents as well as other unions has helped to keep the fight going.

If you wish to donate to their cause, please make cheques payable to: "Local 455 Dispute Fund" and send them to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, #220-2445-13th Avenue, Regina, SK S4P 0W1.

Darin Milo is a member of the Briarpatch Board of Directors.

*We declare that in memory of the
massacre of fourteen women
at the École Polytechnique in Montreal in
1989, that all violence against women be
condemned and
we further declare to ensure a
zero tolerance policy towards
violence within our unions
and our communities.*



*Saskatchewan
Federation of Labour*

#220-2445-13th Avenue, Regina SK S4P 0W1
Telephone: (306) 525-0197 - FAX: (306) 525-8960
e-mail: sfl@sk.sympatico.ca

The SFL Webcast

A new media experiment.

by Armand Roy

The 44th annual Saskatchewan Federation of Labour convention was the first labour convention broadcast on the internet to the world. East West Communications Inc. used four cameras to cover the event. Anyone with a 56K modem and Realplayer G2 could access the entire convention in real time, both video and audio. Added features included special interviews not seen by the delegates, such as on-the-spot questions of delegates and repeat webcasts of highlights of the day.

East West Communications Inc. is a Regina-based company developing the technology to bring conferences live to the World Wide Web. "We are extremely happy with our first live-cast experiment," company president Don List said. "We now know the technology is there to bring a very high-quality image to people, anywhere in the world."

"The next step in our company's development plan is to explore the interactive potential of live-casting conferences on the Web. We know people go to conferences to be a part of a community of individuals with similar interests and experiences. We want to see if a virtual community can be built from people tuning into the conference over the internet. We think there is great potential to increase not only the number of people who can take part in conferences, but also in the impact the conferences have on the way people think and do business."

SFL president Barb Byers recognizes the potential live-casting offers

unions. "I think it's great that union members across the province were able to see what happened at the 1999 convention. Not everyone could get the time off work to get to Saskatoon, and not everyone can be a delegate."



Vern Campbell is the manager of Accelerated Networks, a division of SaskTel Research and Development. "East West used our Club Magic site and media server for their link to the Web. The video quality was outstanding. High speed internet users were treated to a quality of service that was second to none. It is exactly the kind of high quality audio and video production that is making the Web the media of the future."

This year the Canadian Labour Congress embarked upon a project called "Union Wave" which broadcast radio programming live to the Metropolitan Toronto area during their convention. The webcast in Saskatoon of the SFL convention adds another dimension to the concept of using modern technology to explore social and

worker oriented media.

East West Communications is experimenting with the latest technologies towards developing alternatives to the media giants now prevalent in Canada. Their goal is to create a mainstream alternative by investigating new technologies as they merge with the old.

The progress of the internet has been compared to television in the 1950s. In fact internet technology is moving so fast that within a very short time it will become the centrepiece for home entertainment. This offers real opportunity for social activists to develop communication networks. It's the anarchy of the web that is its strength.

Labour and social action groups have long yearned to have the power of the media on their side. There has been a push for a national labour-friendly newspaper but the costs are astronomical. TV is regulated by the CRTC and the costs and difficulties of getting a license are almost insurmountable. The internet and the convergence of technology provide the rare opportunity for an affordable media outlet. As computers proliferate our lives and become a mainstay of the average Canadian home, the internet becomes the media of choice. The experiments by East West Communications and the CLC Union Wave have shown that the technology exists. We only need to focus it.

Armand Roy is a member of CEP Local 87S and co-founder of East West Communications Inc.

Saskatchewan Politics *from Left to Right*

An interview with Lorne Brown, Joe Roberts and Jack Warnock.

by Ormond McKague



Joe Roberts, Lorne Brown and Jack Warnock

For those interested in the history of politics in Saskatchewan, a small but important book was published this fall: *Saskatchewan Politics from Left to Right: '44 - '99*. The authors are three Saskatchewan political economists, academics and activists: Lorne Brown, Joe Roberts and Jack Warnock. All are well-known in Saskatchewan. For over 30 years each has written on various aspects of the Saskatchewan experience and Canadian political affairs. All are life-long activists in struggles for peace, justice, labour, and civil rights.

Briarpatch invited them to participate in a round-table discussion about the issues in their book and about contemporary Saskatchewan politics. The following represents their comments, points of view and concerns. Their ideas will no doubt be provocative to some, and we encourage short responses from our readers.

Briarpatch: One of the main points in your book is that during this century, Saskatchewan developed a type of agrarian populism that came to espouse (through a series of historic and demographic developments) a social democratic, progressive, and co-operative ideology. You indicate that this ideology has become "hegemonic" - that is, it dominates the political and economic ethos of the province. In 1944, this ideology became wedded to a particular political party - the CCF/NDP. Does such a hegemonic ideology still exist in Saskatchewan today? And, if so, why has the NDP forsaken its adherents (and presumably the electoral majority they represent) to espouse the reactionary ideology of neo-liberalism?

Roberts: That's a complicated question because it goes to the heart of what we mean by hegemony. The original hegemonic ideology was social democratic up to a certain time but subsequently, probably starting in the 1970s but certainly in the 1980s and 1990s, it has been superseded. Now that doesn't mean that it doesn't reside as a subordinate ideology within the population, but hegemony has two different functions: an educative function and a dominating function. The point about an ideology is that it doesn't exist by itself but is an interaction between a political party and the populace. We can't speak of an ideology being hegemonic in itself but rather in the way by which the party and the populace make use of that ideology. At present the

previous ideology has been superseded by an ideology of neo-liberalism, but I would also call it "right-wing populism." This is subtle and complex because populism flows between left, centre and right. We allude to David Laycock's book on prairie populism and he does an excellent job of showing the way these things penetrate each other and shift in emphasis from one time period to the next. So it's a complicated question which doesn't permit a simplistic answer. But if you use the term hegemony, you're going to have to focus on what the party does to reflect but also to guide the popular ideology. The party plays an important central role in identifying what the hegemonic ideology is.

Brown: One thing I would like to add to that refers particularly to the last part of the question, "why did the NDP forsake its adherents" and embrace neo-liberalism. The point we make in the book is that this is happening universally with social democracy. Europe is a good example: 13 of the 15 European Union countries are governed by social democrats who were mainly elected by working classes who were sick and tired of conservatism. They wanted something different and yet in almost every case the social democratic parties they supported embraced neo-liberalism. There's a reference in our book to Greg Albo, the economist from York University, who argues that what's taken place in the last ten years is the second qualitative change in social democracy in this century. The first was earlier in the century when it decided to reform capitalism rather than overthrow it. The second occurred over the last 20 to 30 years. Although many social democratic parties continued to believe in the social ownership of the means of production, a social democratic reformist formation has been replaced by a liberal formation. The British Labour Party is a good example. Tony Blair has removed the part that deals with socialist ownership of the means of production from the party's constitution. They are now liberals instead of reformist social democrats in the classical sense. What happened in Britain and Europe is happening everywhere else.

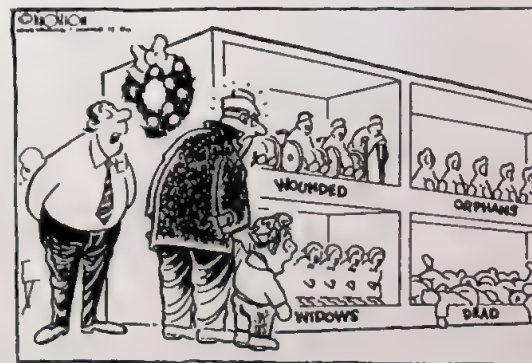
Briarpatch: Can Saskatchewan - a small have-not province in a small country - mount any kind of effective opposition to the global domination of the neo-liberal agenda backed, as it is, by American military might and by the overwhelming power of such international organizations as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization? And if the answer must be "yes," what lessons can we learn from the Tommy Douglas CCF in the years after 1944 when, it can be argued, they created a progressive and social democratic province surrounded by a reactionary capitalist nation and continent?

Warnock: The neo-liberal order is not accepted by everyone. Around the world there is a clear distinction between

the elite who want a neo-liberal order and the mass of people who do not. Even in western Europe, when they voted for those social democratic parties, they didn't vote for neo-liberalism. They voted for a social democratic alternative. You see this developing in all the international solidarity movements. There's a ground swell of popular opposition to neo-liberalism around the world. We saw that just recently in the elections in Venezuela and Argentina where there were massive votes against the established neo-liberal governments. Every country around the world has new political parties and new political movements opposing neo-liberalism and advancing alternatives - all trying to work it out within their national boundaries, using the government and the state when they see them as the only way to combat neo-liberalism. Here in Saskatchewan the government is saying we can't do anything so we won't try anything. What does that mean? It means no political mobilization and a drop in participation. People get really cynical and drop away as they have in the last two elections. Say, for example, you want to nationalize the oil industry in Saskatchewan. There would be confrontations all over, but you use that to build political opposition and to help people understand what the forces are and where they should stand on an issue like that. So it's a political development. You have to try. If you just sit back and do nothing, nothing is ever going to change.

Happy Holidays

from the Regina Postal Workers!



Help promote peace and justice this holiday season by ensuring that your gifts are non-violent and haven't been made in sweatshops by children.

Look for - Canadian-made gifts

Avoid - the Disney collection of toys and clothes



Regina Local

Roberts: Your question compared the present to the situation when Douglas came to office. It's important to remember that in the period after 1945 the population was coming out of depression and war. There was a deep-seated popular revulsion against the dominant order. And I think it's fair to say that there is a deep-seated revulsion against the dominant order today. I come back to the concept of hegemony. In the time of Douglas and the CCF, the left populist perspective was extensive within the population, in the farm movements and in the co-ops. Today most of those organizations have abandoned the notion of resistance and revulsion to capitalism. The farm movement today is dominated by groups and individuals who embrace the capitalist order. The co-ops have become part of the problem, not part of the solution. Many organizations such as trade unions and teachers' federations have ceased to educate their members in socialist or co-operative values and attitudes, or even left populist attitudes. So we are now in a time period comparable to that after World War II. Then the CCF expressed a point of view that coincided with what large portions of the population believed and advocated. Interestingly, Romanow feels that he is expressing the point of view of the dominant popular perspective - and to some degree he is probably correct. And so what we come back to in the last analysis is that the NDP continues to trade on its historic hegemonic role while at the same time abandoning an anti-capitalist perspective. In other words, the NDP no longer feels it needs to defend the people of Saskatchewan from the vicissitudes of the international trading system and indeed imagines that in some fashion they can be part of it. This is a vast illusion.

Brown: I don't think we have to go back as far as Tommy Douglas for an alternative approach. The Blakeney governments in the 1970s did quite a bit within the capitalist system. They took over half of the potash industry, set up SaskOil, had the Land Bank and introduced some new parts to the welfare state. At least they had a somewhat defensive strategy.

Briarpatch: Your book is clear in its denunciation of Roy Romanow and the policies of the NDP under his leadership. You lump him in with the Reagan-Thatcher-Mulroney neo-liberal agenda. You see him as a social democratic sell-out in the same camp as Blair, Schröder and now McDonough. You say he is as reactionary a provincial premier as Klein or Filmon. In addition, you describe how he exerts a top-down power *within* the party, a kind of cronyism that operates through cabinet to caucus and from caucus to domination of the rank and file. This centralized control prevents either serious internal questioning or the possibility of social democratic policies. Given this concentration of political power, should the left in Saskatchewan focus

on the man - to get rid of Romanow as quickly as possible and to work to replace him with "one of our own" as the Waffle attempted with Don Mitchell in the early 1970s?

Brown: I think that would be worse than a waste of time in terms of the energy of the movement. To get into an argument about whether it's mostly Romanow's fault and that he should be replaced is counter-productive. It reminds me of an example used by Sam Gindin about the Ontario context: Imagine a young trade unionist who got politicized on the shop floor in the struggles of the Ontario Days of Action. If asked to come into the moribund NDP to change it, his reaction would be extremely negative - as ours should be. I just don't think it's realistic.



George Taylor, Roy Romanow, Allan Blakeney, and Don Mitchell at the 1970 Saskatchewan NDP Leadership Convention.

Warnock: It seems to me that the chance of that succeeding is less than at any time in the history of the party because there's absolutely no left remaining within the NDP.

Roberts: I concur in that. People have attempted for years to bore from within to try to build the party. In saying this, incidentally, it should be kept in mind that there are a great many very fine people who are committed and work in the NDP resolutely and who continue to hope and expect that with the passing of Romanow things will change. But there is a reality that this is not just Romanow's party. It is something that has been constructed over a long period of time. The fact that the Waffle left the Saskatchewan NDP rather than being driven out as happened in Ontario reflects a complete roadblock. The Waffle simply was unable to participate fully and actively as a left caucus within the NDP. And this was back in the early 1970s. The NDP has never been friendly to internal dissent. One of the populist characteristics of the party is an insistence on unity and it is not

the kind of unity one finds in the trade union movement. It is a unity of subordination to a leader and a leadership group that enforces its perspective consistently. So the reason that there is no longer much in the way of a left in the NDP is that it has been systematically defeated and systematically rooted out and made unwelcome. So the internal democracy of the NDP has become more and more artificial as time has gone on. And the prospects of using the internal democracy of the party in order to transform it are simply not realistic.

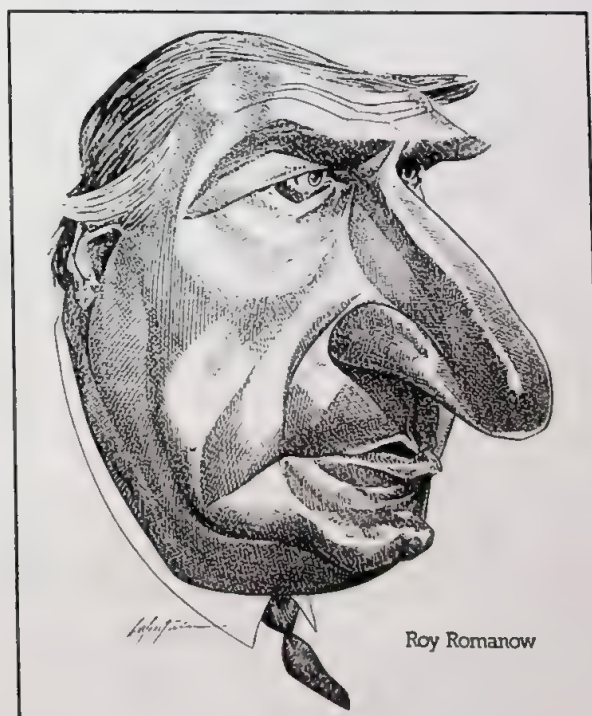
Briarpatch: In your book (page 80) you state, "The SFL remains committed to the NDP even when it tramples on issues close to the heart of the working class." This, you imply, weakens the role of labour in any coalition building and divides the labour movement in Saskatchewan at a time when a united left in opposition to the NDP is increasingly necessary. Do you foresee any change in the SFL position? Why or why not?

Brown: I think there are possibilities of change. You're seeing change in the labour movement across the country and that will affect Saskatchewan. We saw some in a very limited way in this last election in that normally the SFL automatically endorses the NDP and that's it - it campaigns for them, gives them money, etc. This time they adopted an official strategy that wasn't very effective. Probably it was attempting to move away without ruffling too many feathers. This was the strategy of only supporting non-incumbents among the NDP candidates. This, I think, was a silly strategy, to tell you the truth, but at least it's a sign that there's some pressure. A lot of people in the unions didn't want to support the NDP. Of course there are union leaders that are as hard line as ever and support the NDP. The compromise strategy didn't work very well. The trade unionists I talked to regard this as a weak and vacillating position. I guess what I'm saying is that there is some change afoot and that this is especially true among young trade unionists. And in fact there's a fair scattering of young trade unionists in the New Green Alliance that you would never have found a few years ago. They would have been afraid of being drummed out of their unions. They're not afraid any more. I think the SFL is going to become more politically diverse and politically tolerant. At least there's a possibility of that in the future. Labour across the country is undertaking change. Buzz Hargrove is the best example but he is by no means the only one.

Warnock: The trade unionists that I talk to think that sooner or later the labour movement has to decide what it's going to do. We've had no serious opposition from the labour movement here to anything the NDP has done. This follows the pattern of New Zealand where the labour move-

ment offered no criticism of the Labour government even though it was bringing in policies to the right of Margaret Thatcher. At the end of six years they had nothing left. And the rationale was the same there: if we oppose the Labour Party, we'll get a worse government in. But in the end they had nothing anyhow. So at some point the trade union movement has to decide whether it's really going to stand up for trade union issues regardless of the party in power. I think there is a growing sense among trade unionists that the SFL should be looking after labour's interests first and not the NDP's interests.

Briarpatch: You indicate that one of the many negative results of the neo-liberal agenda is an erosion of the democratic process: citizens feel powerless, become cynical and see voting as a useless and futile exercise. This is indeed happening in Saskatchewan, but seems to fly in the face of a long tradition of political involvement here, electorally and within communities, organizations and unions. What can be done to address this significant public withdrawal?



Roberts: Our argument is that in Saskatchewan we have a dominant party - if you like the state party - the NDP. When it abandoned the left and joined the right, people became confused and politically depressed. As a result they abandoned the hope of a political alternative. Our position is that the only way hope and confidence in the political process can be restored is for a movement and/or party of the left to emerge. We saw such an initiative by the New Green Alliance in this last election. It was a first attempt and of course, with its meagre resources and in an environment

that is scarcely sympathetic to it at the moment, it didn't do particularly well. I think the way by which people's willingness to act politically is restored is by having a choice. The only time in this century when American electoral participation rose into the 60 percent realm of eligible voters was in the 1930s during the New Deal. At no time before or since has the American population participated in anything more than 50 percent of eligible voters. In Saskatchewan's current experience of a declining participation rate, I think our only solution is a political party, a political movement, which offers a left alternative. I don't think you will get a big turnout for a right-wing alternative.

Brown: One thing I would like to see happen is for the left to put a little more thought into devising some issues that can mobilize a vast majority of the population. A good example is the taxation issue. All you get from all parties in the media every day is you have to cut taxes, that it is the be all and end all, that cutting taxes is a good thing. I think a movement should arise that says the opposite - that cutting taxes is not a good thing, that rearranging taxes to make them fair, to make the rich pay taxes for a change, is a good thing. I saw a little bit of this in the last election. A good statement by CUPE asked, what's all this crap about cutting taxes, what does that mean? It means laying off public sector workers; it means cuts in health, education and social services. It strikes me that this is the sort of issue that, if handled properly, can get a lot of people interested. First of all, all the public sector unions are surely against tax cuts - they'd be fools to be in favour of tax cuts. Secondly, everyone wants a decent health and education system. Thirdly, it addresses issues of the unorganized poor. When you cut taxes you make them pay for it by cutting back on welfare rates and other services to the poor. This would put pressure on the body politic as a whole and start pushing back this tax-cutting propaganda that's been almost unopposed for ten years. A few years ago in Regina there was a referendum on decreasing taxes. It was defeated in part because groups like seniors and the disabled were mobilized to vote against it. There hasn't been nearly enough of

that kind of mobilization in recent years. I think you could organize around issues like that much more effectively than the left has ever done.

Warnock: The official turnout was 62 percent in this last provincial election. The real turnout was only 55 percent because the enumeration was so poor. But the point I want to make is that this is not happening everywhere. Our electoral system itself contributes to it. Where you have proportional representation and where people have a chance to vote for a party whose ideology they can clearly identify, there's a much higher turnout.

Briarpatch: Your book suggests three answers to the question, "What do we do now?" - 1. To work within the NDP to return it to its social democratic traditions, 2. To establish a coalition of progressive organizations who will work to influence policy and legislation from outside the electoral process, and 3. To establish a new political party to fill the social democratic vacuum left when the NDP moved to the right. You are clear about the difficulties and hard work involved in any of these options, but seem to favour the third: a new political party. Which option do you see as the most viable and why?

Roberts: The most potentially successful would probably be to continue to work with the NDP on the grounds that that's the easiest thing

to do. That we would get a left-wing party out of that is the least probable. The hardest of all these propositions as far as I'm concerned is building a new political party. But, on the other hand, I think that's the most likely to achieve the objective that we want. And I think this is a time period in which there is some possibility of success. Certainly the NDP is truly dead nationally. It may limp along in Ontario and B.C. for a period, but its meaning as a left party in Saskatchewan is over. I think there are some forces in the trade union movement and among people who have abandoned the NDP who are today more receptive to an alternative party than at any time in the past 35 years. So I would say that although it's the most difficult, the chances of achieving a left political party are best with a struggle to build a new one.

Brown: I think the only thing I would add to that is that your second option of building a much stronger social move-



Allan Blakeney and Roy Romanow celebrate the 1991 election victory over the Devine Tories.



ment should precede the building of a viable party on the left. And that social movement for quite a long time would probably include unions and women's and Aboriginal organizations as well as left parties that would work together. And eventually what might come out of that is a left party of major significance. It's a very long-term thing. I think that kind of building will precede a major left party. Parties born too soon without a sufficient base are stillborn. We saw a lot of that kind of thing in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Quite a few parties on the far left came on the agenda and they lasted for a while and in some cases they even did some good work, but they didn't have any staying power. They didn't have a sufficient base.

Warnock: I think the second option of a national progressive organization is really what we need because the NDP is collapsing as it moves more and more to the right. But I think we also have to consider where the international social democratic parties are going. We are not isolated from that. These social democratic parties are all becoming either totally irrelevant, or on the right like in the Third World or Latin America, or else they move so far to the right that no one could possibly call them left-wing parties any more. And so in all the industrialized countries you're seeing the development of new political parties to the left of the social democrats. In Europe it takes the form of new left parties and Green parties. As the social democratic parties have

have no solutions and no options and this rules them out as viable political parties. I was involved with the New Green Alliance here from the beginning and we see it as a long-run thing. It's not as if we're going to get into power in two or three elections. We see it as part of the international movement against inequality and ecological disaster. Those two thrusts are the main things on which people around the world today are focusing. The social democratic parties have no position on either issue, so they're a waste of time. Or worse. Many of today's social democratic governments are turning out to be better at controlling labour, women and popular organizations than the traditional right-wing parties. They play a functional role on the right.

Briarpatch: Your book was written and published before the last provincial election. Were the election results and the recent forming of a kind of coalition government consistent with the ideas in your book? Were there any surprises? What can progressive citizens learn from the 1999 Saskatchewan election?

Roberts: We came pretty close to predicting the results, perhaps not in the book, but as we were taking into consideration the opinion polls towards the end. There were 24 percent who had not made up their minds and 20 percent refused to tell anybody what they thought, and five percent weren't going to vote. Well that comes to 49 percent. Under

those circumstances we thought that the outcome might be awfully close. I frankly don't think that this election did anything to alter our assessment.

Brown: I don't interpret the rise of the Saskatchewan Party as the result of a right-wing crusade. It's partly that - the Saskatchewan Party is a right-wing party, no doubt about that. But I think the vote was mostly a protest vote. Certainly some of their vote was a dedicated right-wing vote, but I think a large part of it was a protest vote, and not just in the rural areas but in the cities as well. That's one thing that surprised many of us - how well the Saskatchewan Party did in the cities. They didn't elect anyone in the major cities, but they got a lot more votes than people expected. And I think most of that is a protest vote. People are tired of the NDP and they want to vote for anybody that's against the government and they'll vote for the ones that are most likely to threaten the government. Similar things are happening in Europe today. The Schröder social democrats in Germany have been losing a lot of state elections. Tony Blair has been doing very badly in the polls. And in some cases even the far right is rising as we recently saw in Austria and Switzerland. I think two things are going on there and both of them are dangerous. One is that social democrats govern the whole European continent but they're not doing anything in terms of helping the working class or the popular forces. In fact what they're doing is the neo-liberal agenda - much the same way the conservatives did before them. As a result the population is becoming disaffected and because there's no large organized left alternative yet, they're going to turn right. When the right-wing gets back in they'll go at it with even greater vengeance. I think we're in danger of seeing the situation on a world scale get worse before it gets better. I think that is what happened in Saskatchewan. The historic party of the left, the NDP, totally ignored the population - labour, the agrarians, women, Aborigines, you name it - and people either stayed home or went out and voted against them. At least a large number of people did.

Warnock: I was probably the only one around who predicted a minority government. I think that was because of all the door-to-door work I did in the Regina Elphinstone constituency where I ran. So many people told me that they hadn't made up their minds but it was going to be "anybody but the NDP." And this is in a riding which traditionally votes 70 percent NDP. So they stayed at home in droves - they just didn't come out.

Roberts: The situation is not unlike what happened when Bob Rae's government was defeated. The labour movement in Ontario quite explicitly repudiated the NDP and one result was the rise of the right-wing version of conservatism.

When the people's party rejects or fails to live up to its historic mandate, then people will punish it and will punish it good, even if this means voting for a very right-wing party. I agree with Brown completely. It's a mistake to imagine that the Saskatchewan Party in two years has gone from nothing to a real party of the right. Not that it isn't a party of the right, but simply that it would not get the same kind of support if there was an NDP that was doing what it was historically mandated to do.

Warnock: Romanow's reaction to the failure of the NDP in the election is exactly as we predicted: he blames it on the party not being right-wing enough. In his interview with the *Globe and Mail* he says that we must move farther to the right and we must give up the Tommy Douglas legacy because it no longer has any validity today. And that's exactly what we thought he would do. Instead of trying to figure out why so many NDP supporters stayed home, he says we should move farther to the right.

Their book is available at most book stores in Regina and Saskatoon. It is also available for \$8 from Hinterland Publications, 2138 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK S4P 2R7. Briarpatch would like to thank Edith Mountjoy for her invaluable assistance in transcribing the above discussion.



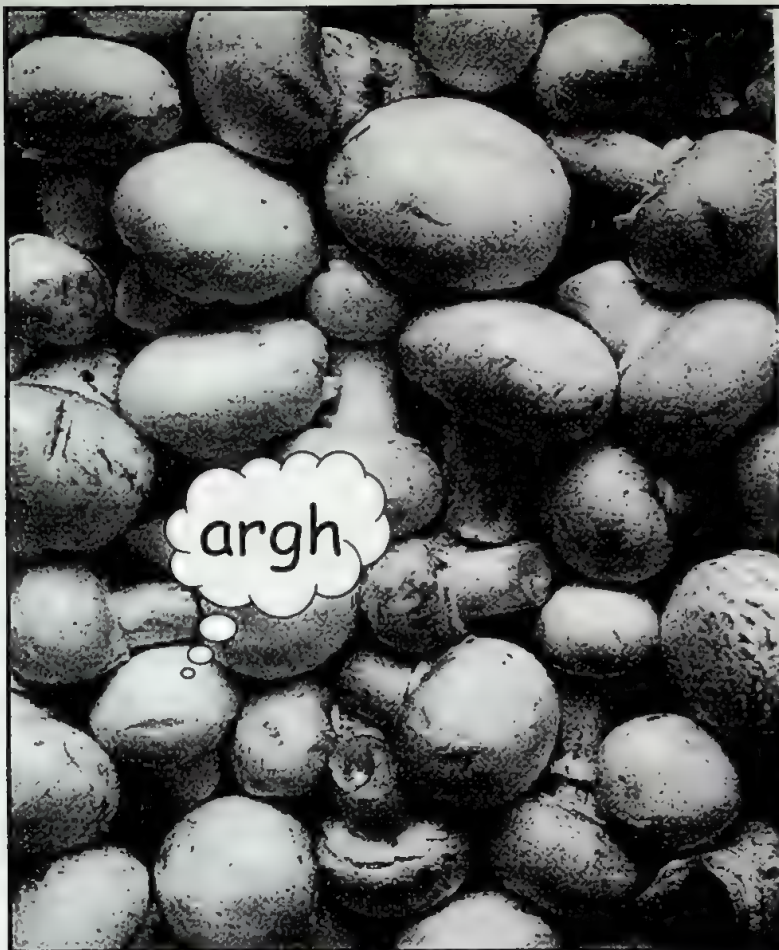
**Pacific
Fresh
Fish**

525-9147

13th & Robinson

Fresh **COD**, Live **LOBSTER**, Fresh **SOLE**, Atlantic **SCALLOPS**, Fresh **SALMON**, Jumbo **SHRIMPS**, Fresh **PICKEREL**, King **CRAB** Legs, Fresh **WHITEFISH**, **HALIBUT** Steaks, Smoked **SALMON**, Salt or Pickled **HERRING**, Rainbow **TROUT**, Smoked **GOLDEYE**, Red **SNAPPER**, & **MUCH MORE!**

DROP IN SOON!



**How are they
treating you
at work
these days?**

**Maybe a union would
help.**

We represent 17,000 workers in
many kinds of workplaces. We
might be the union for you.

Call

522.8571 in Regina

1.800.667.5221 outside the city.

SGEU 
Working Together For Saskatchewan

OPEIU 397

**Professionally representing
Saskatchewan workers
since 1946.**

109-2709-12th Avenue

Regina, SK S4T 1J3

Phone: (306) 352-9551 Fax: (306) 347-2720

email: opeiu.prairies@sympatico.ca



Die Grünen, the British Greens, and the New Green Alliance in Saskatchewan

Comparing experiences and issues.

by Karl Henriques

In the last Saskatchewan election, many people were relieved at the sight of a new party on the left, the New Green Alliance (NGA). This party has stepped onto the political scene exactly 20 years after an alliance of Green parties contested the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979. Seven years later the British Greens formed. But it took only one year for the now well-known German Greens, Die Grünen, to make their first appearance on the electoral ballot in the 1980 *Bundestag* (national parliament) elections. The experiences of these two parties, particularly regarding the balance of issues in their platforms, may be useful for Saskatchewan's NGA.

Organizational Advantages and Challenges of the "Movement-Party"

All three parties are movement-parties, attempting a two-track approach to dealing with political, social, and ecological issues often left on the margins by the mainstream parties. One of the tracks is the movement, where they militate in direct actions. The movement is not just "close to the grassroots," it is part of grassroots movements that attempt to push new issues into the public arena, from pubs to parliament. As movement-parties, they simultaneously work on the second track, in the "formal" realm of politics, the parliamentary party system.

This two-track approach has enabled members of such movement-parties to access both the vitality of those who not only talk about grassroots democracy, but who actually live it, while offering themselves a venue to go beyond the informal realm of discussion and protest. If one remains at this level, one too often can, as the great American militant Saul Alinsky once said, "discuss and discuss and end in disgust."

Instead, their complementary organization into an "anti-party party" allows them official access to the realm of political agenda-setting and thus possibly a share in the

capacity to affect subnational and national decision-making. Ultimately, perhaps, they can even win access to the full administrative power of the state to implement some of the policies which began as discussion topics in pubs.

Of course, this is the ideal scenario, and goodness knows that progressive social and environmental legislation stemming from movement and militant activity actually occurs too infrequently. But there are successes, and without feeling complacent, such successes need to be appreciated. They result, after all, from the hard slogging of many militants over a long time for an issue.

To return specifically to the case of the British and German Green parties:

1. What have been the general differences in the issues these parties pursued?
2. What was the historic nature of some of those differences in party platforms?
3. How have some of those differences, especially between the British Greens and Bündnis '90/Die Grünen affected their success in raising public action and prompting elites into action?
4. Finally, what are some of the lessons that Saskatchewan's NGAmay have to garner from the respective experiences of Bündnis '90/Die Grünen versus the British Green parties?

Comparing the British and German Greens

While the British and German Greens tend to share the four "green pillars" (ecology, social equality and justice, grassroots democracy, and non-violence), they have also translated these founding principles into somewhat different issues depending on their members' deliberations. Furthermore, the respective German and British Green party positions also tend to reflect the distinct history of ideas of the European continent and Britain.

The German Greens, along with most of the continen-

tal left parties, have demonstrated a higher commitment to the welfare state as a basic premise for policy formulation. Whether they come from the "green-green" or "left-green" side of the party, they have been consistently closer to traditional, state-oriented left thinking, as evidenced by their support for the Social Chapter and the position of trade unions in the European integration process.

For the British Greens, it is the more left-anarchist ("red-pepper") wing of the party which has mobilized most strongly. However, even their more pragmatic "right"-wing is much less inclined than most Continental Greens to accept what they would see as state and institutional welfare principles in social policy.

Therefore, unlike the British Greens, Bündnis '90/Die Grünen have even more recently emphasized not only the ecological dimension in the European integration process, but also the social reconstruction of Europe as a whole. Their platform has put particular emphasis on the social dimension of any treaty-making. On the other hand, the

year) played a significant role in the relatively weak electoral and public success of the British Greens. However, the relatively higher importance that the German Greens lay on issues of economic security through the maintenance of a strong (but more democratic) welfare state system has helped them maintain the key resource of public support to influence the legislative agenda.

There is a historical background to the split between English and Continental political theory that has no doubt contributed to the differing interpretation of the continental Greens' four pillars. While the continental (and thus German) interpretation favours more social and economic rights issues, the British interpretation emphasizes environmental, civil and political rights issues (including bio- and cultural diversity, and non-, even anti-institutional over institutional political activity). This split can be traced back to the emphasis on not only political and civil rights, but also economic and social rights on the continent, stemming from the influence of the French Revolution and its inclusion of

the notion of *solidarité*, versus the influence of the American Constitution and its one-sided emphasis on local democracy without regard to social conditions.

Canada and other former colonies, due to close politico-cultural-linguistic similarities, have remained fairly tied to the one-sided individualism of the dominant British philosophic tradition. It finds its political and economic manifestation in the American constitutional tradition on individual "life, liberty, and property."

The schismatic treatment of "positive" measures for achieving justice over the *laissez-faire*, or "negative" measures was thus at first theorized in England (from Hobbes and Locke to



Some of the NGA candidates in the 1999 provincial election.

British Greens welcomed John Major's opt-out clause on the Social Chapter because it went beyond what they saw as the competence of the European Union. Bündnis '90/Die Grünen strongly attacked Major's opt out of the social clause as an unwelcome attempt to exclude social concerns from the European project.

Clearly, the predominance of the mass media by extremely conservative forces and the absence of proportional representation in European elections in Britain (until this

Bentham), and then codified in the American Constitution. This is the historical nature and lingering effect of the Anglo-American bias against positive, social and economic measures required to achieve the conditions for social justice.

Platform Lessons for Saskatchewan's NGA

The NGA's ability to provide a platform which engenders the commitment of citizens will depend partially on the degree to which it is viable, coherent, comprehensive,

focussed, positive and relevant in the eyes of its citizens, including their every day and long-term concerns. The British Greens brought some important, largely environmental issues to the forefront of public and even legislative attention (notably in the cases of packaging waste, vehicle emissions, and biotechnology). However, the British Greens have been struggling to maintain the same level of support after the 1989 European elections when environmental issues became eclipsed by the public's concern for basic economic security issues.

The German Greens on the other hand, despite their 1991 routing, have maintained a strong presence in the formal and informal political realms as moral guardians in environmental areas like biotechnology, as well as remaining the mouthpiece for widespread public concerns over the reduction of non-affluent citizens' sense of economic security.

The platform of the NGA shows an admirable balance of far-sighted yet relevant issues to citizens living in Saskatchewan today. Specifically, the NGA has a core set of environmental and diversity policies, such as energy conservation, non-nuclear energy use, parental leave and midwifery care, respectful resource allocation back to the aboriginal community, an emphasis on alternative health measures, and the introduction of proportional representation.

But the NGA nicely combines these issues with its redistributive social and economic justice platform. For instance, it emphasizes the need for a progressive tax system based on the ability to pay; a shorter work week to improve the quality of work and the number of work spaces; im-

proved labour legislation; supporting the role of Crown corporations to control the critical resource base of Saskatchewan; fair trade and free higher education.

Finally, their program is well-balanced with the all important, key entwining of environmental policies which allow for greater economic security for citizens with such policies as sustainable northern development, and the promotion of ecological and small scale farming away from corporate farming.

Karl Henriques is interested in the current struggle for a "social Europe" and its potential implications for international justice. He also teaches European politics and political theory in the Department of Political Science at the University of Regina.



R.R. McKenzie Agency

- General Insurance
- Motor Licence Issuer

569-2456

1903 Argyle Street (at Saskatchewan Drive) Regina
Robin D. McKenzie (Manager)



EVERY WORKING WOMAN AND MAN

needs someone in their corner. That is the role of unions. Unions represent workers' interests, making sure their voices are heard, and ensure fair treatment for their members.

If you are concerned about

low wages, job security, health and safety, or benefits, isn't it time you did something about it?

Organize...give us a call and we'll show you how.

Do something to tip the scale in your favour - ORGANIZE.

RETAIL, WHOLESALE AND DEPARTMENT STORE UNION

REGINA OFFICE
1233 Winnipeg Street
Regina, SK S4R 1K1
Phones: 569-9311
& 569-0440

Fax: 569-9521
rwdsu.regina@sk.sympatico.ca

SASKATOON OFFICE
#210-3311A Fairlight Drive
Saskatoon, SK S7M 3Y5
Phone: 384-9885
Fax: 384-1006
rwdsu.saskatoon@sk.sympatico.ca

Part of succeeding in and enjoying a job is knowing your rights as a worker.

Workers have the right to fair and reasonable treatment and to work in conditions free from discrimination and health or safety hazards.

The Grain Services Union represents workers in the grain-handling, food-processing, and other industries. We are one of many Saskatchewan unions committed to full and fair access to employment opportunities for all people.

A job should not cost you your dignity or your rights. Know your rights as a worker and settle for nothing less.



Grain Services Union
2334 McIntyre Street
Regina, SK
S4P 2S2

Phone: (306) 522-6686
E-Mail: gsu.regina@sk.sympatico.ca
www3.sk.sympatico.ca/grains

CUSO is looking for Canadians with skills and experience in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, environment, and community activism to work in volunteer programmes in some thirty countries world-wide. Standard contracts: 2 years, plus language training, basic cost of living and benefits.

Since 1961, more than 12,000 Canadians have gone overseas to work with CUSO's partners. CUSO supports alliances for global social justice. We work with people striving for freedom, self-determination, gender and racial equality and cultural survival.

If the time is not right for you to commit to an overseas posting, you may want to volunteer your time, energy and expertise on a local committee.



Check our web site at www.cuso.org
for current postings and information on how to apply
or call 1-888-434-CUSO (2876)
for the office nearest you.

THE CARPET INDUSTRY HAS AGREED TO FIGHT CHILD LABOR BY LABELING ITS PRODUCTS FACTORIES THAT AGREE TO USE NO CHILD LABOR PAY GOVERNMENTALLY-MANDATED MINIMUM WAGES AND AGREE TO INSPECTIONS, CARRY THIS LABEL



SEASON'S GREETINGS

Let's be sure that we **Free the Children** by checking the tag before putting it in the bag.

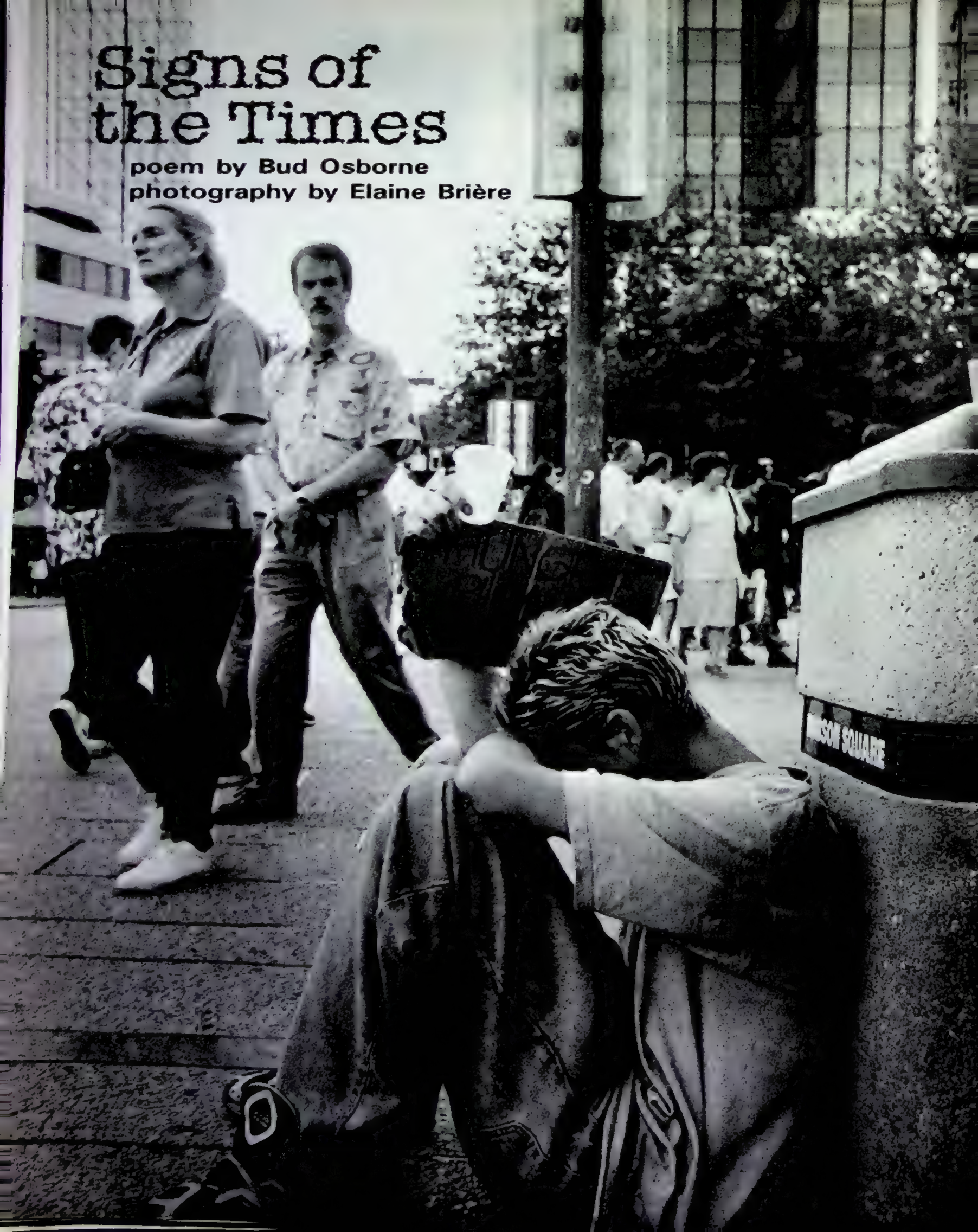
Children should be free to play and not be exploited every day. Child labour is illegal and immoral. Let's work *together* to end it.



Signs of the Times

poem by Bud Osborne

photography by Elaine Brière



signs of the times

across north america
hand held pieces of cardboard
crudely lettered
or painstakingly printed
express
the lived poetry of poverty

signs

call to us
beg
plead
pray
for a meagre
but heroic
response



Eaton's Centre, Vancouver

give to all who ask

but they want my money for alcohol
they want my money for drugs

give to all who ask

but there's too many
of these
signs that disclose
and subvert
by their very understatement
the social extermination
of human beings

their sheer physical presence
their faces
their eyes
their likeness
pierce our entertainments
pierce our wastefulness
our priorities
our conscience

no home
no job
no money
no food
and name
preventable diseases
untreated
because of inability
to pay for relief or healing

signs

reaching from the atlantic
to the pacific oceans

please help
god bless you
have a good day
god bless
please help



Main Street Skystation, Vancouver



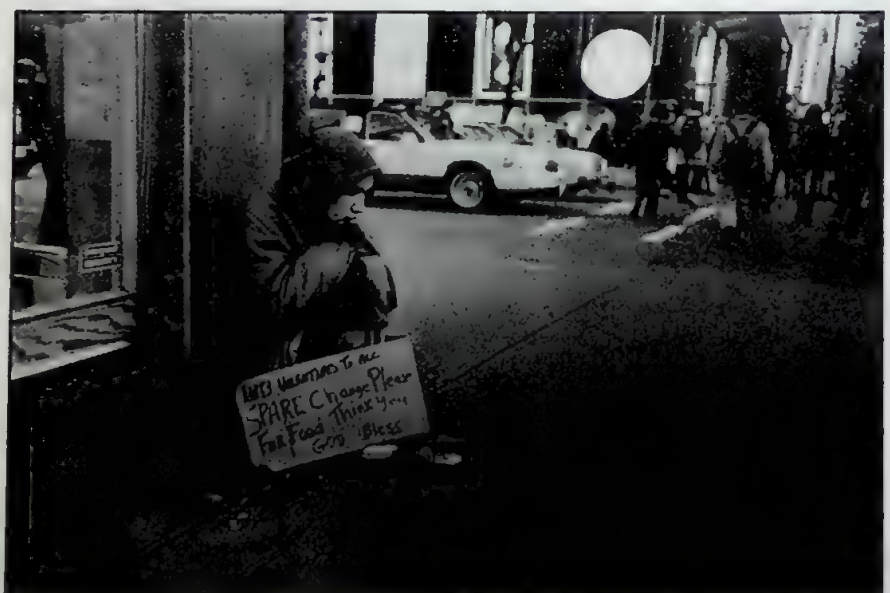
Burrard and Georgia, Vancouver

a blind man
homeless
holds a sign
and sees through us
so deeply and clearly
we can't stand it
and demand
public space be made private
and these living signs
driven elsewhere
anywhere
nowhere
by more bylaws
by more police

these living signs
anger
they terrify
because they reflect
our own possibilities
in this anti-human economic system

no food
no job
no money
no home

so we need more
zones of exclusion
more censorship of human beings
who hold
these signs of the times
because
they hold them
for us
all



Valentine's Day, Vancouver

Bud Osborne is a poet and poverty rights activist living on the downtown East Side in Vancouver. Elaine Brière is a photographer and social activist living in Mission, B.C. This is an excerpt from a collaboration between Elaine Brière and Bud Osborne on a book of poetry and photographs on poverty in Canada to be called "Signs of Our Times." They are still looking for a publisher.



PLEASE!
SPARE SOME
CHANGE FOR
FOOD + SHELTER

**Top Hats and Head Loads:
Two worlds apart, in Liberia.**

by Beatrice Harding

Beatrice Harding, publisher
2230 Smith Street, Regina,
SK S4P 2P4, 1999, \$21.95.

reviewed by George Manz

This interesting book is about the lifestyle of the ruling class living in Monrovia, Liberia and the enormous contrast with the peasants in the hinterland. The author labels the former group the "top hats" - those who live in the mansions of Monrovia.

The other group she calls the "head loads" - those who carry woven baskets on their heads filled with various goods for sale at nearby markets. These people lived in mud and thatch houses in the interior, far from the bright lights of the capital.

Bea Harding and her husband Bill lived in Liberia in 1961 and 1962, while Bill was working for a United Nations agency.

The book explores their diverse interactions with various classes of Liberian society. While they lived with the peasants most of the time (and experienced first-hand what life was like for the ordinary Liberian), every two or three weeks they got to go to Monrovia to pick up supplies and mail. There they got to mingle with government officials and other dignitaries, some of whom actually wore top hats.

This book is well worth reading. Not only does Bea write very well, but her attention to detail is amazing. If you ever want to learn how to build a thatch house out of nothing but tree poles, vines (not a nail to be found), mud, and palm leaves, you can find the details in this book.

Her book is liberally sprinkled with a large number of photographs, both colour as well as black and white. One of the colour photos that intrigued me showed a large, round Coca Cola sign perched on top of a tall post, beside a thatched hut in the Liberian interior. And this was almost 40 years ago.

One of the highlights of the book is its exploration of African cultures, which the author hopes will help North American readers "dispel the myth of Western superiority."

A LABOUR MINUTE



The pit ponies' six car limit

Although horses and mules are not used in Canadian mines any more, there was a time when they were very common in underground coal and hard rock mining operations.

These "pit ponies" as they were called, pulled ore or coal cars along mine drifts (tunnels) on narrow gauge rail lines. When the cars reached the main shaft the ore was hoisted to the surface. Most horses learned their route and the other mine routines quickly, and could do much of their hauling unsupervised.

Subterranean stables were built, sometimes as much as a mile below ground, and stores of grain, straw and water were maintained there for the horses.

Pit ponies typically worked in total darkness, since the drifts away from the main shaft were not lit. In most areas of the mine the only lights were on the hats of the miners.

The open-topped rail cars the horses pulled could be filled with more than a ton of coal or rock. A standard load for a pit pony was six cars.

Horses would stand and listen to the cars being coupled behind them. When a miner called out "Get up" the six car train would move off.

The older and wiser pit ponies learned to recognize the sound of the linchpin falling into the coupler. If an attempt was made to hook up more than six rail cars, the pit pony might well turn its head around and stare at the offending miner.

Under the glare of his hoofed colleague more than one miner unhooked the seventh ore car, and only then did the pit pony haul the load away.

- Dishaw

Labour Minutes recount the history of working people and take just a minute to read.

**Peace, Power, Righteousness:
An Indigenous Manifesto**
by Taiaiake Alfred
Oxford University Press, Toronto,
\$22.95, 1999.

reviewed by Karen Charleson

Despite the best efforts of Canadian and First Nations' governments to make us believe the contrary, more and more First Nations people are speaking out. Self-government has not brought relief from oppression. Band councils, tribal councils, and national organizations remain, for the most part, unaccountable to their own members. Life on reserves is too often characterized by chaos, alienation, powerlessness, elite control and social dysfunction.

It is dangerous to speak this way in Indian country.

Taiaiake Alfred, Director of the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria, uses the framework of Rotinohshonni (Iroquois) condolence ceremony to illustrate a way through the suffering and discontent of native existence to a place of peace, harmony, reason, and respect.

Alfred argues that factionalism and alienation in native communities

is largely caused by a clash between two fundamentally different and conflicting value systems: the traditional systems that still structure social and cultural relations, and the colonial systems imposed by the state that structure politics. The key to overcoming this situation, he says, is the resurrec-



tion of leadership based upon traditional values. Not good enough, he scathingly continues, for leadership to merely mouth the words and sentiments of tradition while continuing to operate with colonial mentalities and mindsets.

"What drives Native leaders to turn away from their communities and embrace the worst aspects of mainstream society?" Alfred asks. Uncompromisingly he provides the answers: Buying out and co-opting by the state, alienation from home communities, and corruption fed by greed and vanity. A situation, he argues, that is encouraged and supported by a state interested in maintaining the status quo of colonialism with only surface, cosmetic changes; but one that threatens the very survival of native communities as native communities.

Alfred offers this book to both native and non-native readers. No doubt it will prove helpful reading for non-natives. It should, however, be required reading for today's native leaders and politicians. Those who preach tradition, while filling their own pocketbooks and embracing colonial values, will certainly not admit to recognizing themselves in Alfred's descriptions. Those who strive to survive as native people and communities should find both affirmation and inspiration here.

Karen Charleson is a freelance writer, a member of the Hesquiaht First Nation, and lives in Hot Springs Cove.

The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union wants to help you

♂♀

organize

If you work for a living, you have 3 choices in life:

1. whine and complain;
2. quit;
3. organize a union...

What are the problems in your work place?

You have a right to deal with these issues through collective bargaining.

Call us to talk about how going union can provide dignity, job security and justice in your work place.

Time to do something!

CEP

For professional assistance in organizing a union in your workplace call Dave Coles, organizer 1-888-820-3388

Green Economics:

Beyond Supply and Demand to Meeting People's Needs

edited by Molly Scott Cato
& Miriam Kennett

Green Audit, 38 Queen St., Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, Wales SY23, 1PU, Great Britain. £14 includes postage.

reviewed by Terry Wolfwood

The word "green" is used in so many ways that anything from a political party to multinational soap companies can call it their own. I found this collection of essays extremely helpful in defining "green" as a new way of looking at our society and our interaction with the environment.

The authors are an impressive list of academics, politicians, activists, researchers, and workers from Great Britain, Germany, Canada and North American indigenous groups. Together they present a strong position for a new way of looking at economics that includes confronting the deity of economic growth, the need for changes in taxing industry and land, and how a globalized economy plunders the earth and our social values. There is no lack of analysis and alternative practice in

this volume.

Maria Mies of Germany explains how women are exploited in the new unsustainable global economy where tax and legal concessions make sweatshops in the majority world the sites of most manufacturing and the most oppressed labour forces. This manufacturing is also based on the exploitation of the majority world, unrecognized home labour, the environment, and the agricultural base of many societies.

Canadian researcher Tony Clarke outlines the dangers of the international trade agreements, timely reading for the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle.

Jules Pretty of Great Britain develops new alternatives to chemical agriculture. He says that the impressive growth in organic farming, a tenfold increase in Britain alone in the last decade, shows that it is possible to feed the world with self-regulating agroecosystems.

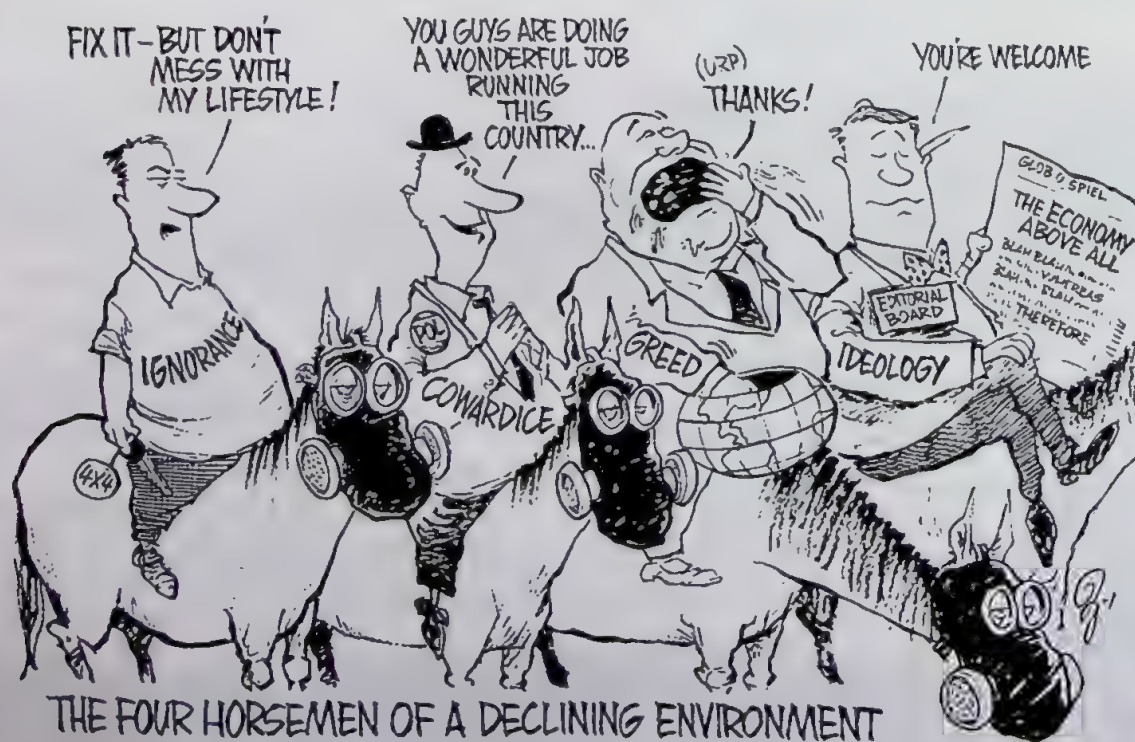
The editors point out that it is impossible to work to save the environment without an understanding of how our economic system destroys the environment. They say that, "To protect

the planet we realize that we need to make changes to the international economic system."

Molly Scott Cato and Chris Busby state that their aim is a society where all people live within a sustainable, self-renewing ecological system. They confront the problems of reaching this goal and describe a tool called the Planetary Impact Index as a means of illustrating a planet-sensitive industrial indicator that includes pollution, workers' rights, energy use, travel of goods and people and other indicators. This includes a critique of irresponsible corporations which could be used to weaken agreements like the MAI and WTO and create locally-based, accountable industry.

This book provides much food for thought and action. I urge readers to order this book, read and discuss it, and act on the many life-saving ideas presented.

Terry Wolfwood works for the Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation in Victoria. She is participating in seminars and events organized by citizen's groups in Seattle during the WTO meeting.



Angels Don't Play This HAARP

by Dr. Nick Begich

& Jeanne Manning

Earthpulse Press, P.O. Box 201393,
Anchorage, Alaska 99520, \$19.95
plus postage.

reviewed by Terry Wolfwood

When Dr. Rosalie Bertell spoke in Victoria this summer she alerted us to new American military "Star Wars" developments in the U.S. and Canadian arctic. One of the programs is called HAARP - the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Project. She credits the authors of this book for providing the public with information about this little known project.

HAARP is a gigantic heater that can cause major disruption in the ionosphere, creating not just holes, but long incisions in the protective layer that keeps deadly radiation from bombarding the planet. If the ionosphere is broken, all life on Earth would be subject to radiation-caused diseases, mutations and damage to our DNA.

HAARP manipulates the electrojet, the powerful direct current band that circles the Earth. By converting this to alternating current, a giant antennae is created that can communicate with American submerged submarines, which often lurk in Canadian waters. HAARP also has the potential to cause major weather changes, to destroy electronic communications systems, to create widespread computer errors, and to combine radar tracking with speed of light destruction systems and to significantly alter human behaviour.

The U.S. thinks it is so technically advanced in these new weapons that it can reject Russian efforts at further disarmament. The U.S. is willing to break many weapons treaties because they have such an enormous scientific and military advantage over Russia and the rest of the world.

Dr. Bertell said HAARP is moni-



HAARP antennas in Alaska.

tored by an ionosphere radar system called SuperDARN - the Super Dual Auroral Radar Network. SuperDARN has stations in many countries, including Canada, with facilities in Saskatoon, Kapuskasing, Goose Bay and most recently, a site near Prince George.

These sites are funded by the Canadian government and private agencies. There has been no official public discussion of Canada's role in the development and uses of this dangerous technology. This book provides the background we need in order to demand more information about what Canada is doing as part of the U.S. military's space war buildup. All life on Earth can be affected by the extremely low frequency (ELF) waves unleashed by HAARP that can penetrate and travel through the Earth.

Canada is committed to spending \$6.6 billion in the next decade on U.S. space war related military spending. Private industry and universities are also involved in these projects. Our official financial assistance to arms manufacturers is growing, since only

companies making military equipment are exempt from NAFTA's "no subsidy" regulations.

There is a strong possibility that Texas Governor George W. Bush will be the next President of the United States. Bush plans to promote Anti-Ballistic Missile systems and to dedicate 20 percent of the military budget to new technologies, like the space war and missile interception programs that link to HAARP and SuperDARN. One result would be to strengthen the already firm and unsavoury links between Canadian government and industry to a dangerous escalation in the American military's plans of global domination.

We need all the information we can find to expose these plans. This book gives us the politics of researching military actions and some of the technical background we need to stop the preparations for a new war on Earth and in space. The book is available by mail order from the publisher.

Terry Wolfwood works for the Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation.

Photo: George Manz



Many Rivers to Cross
a video produced & directed by
Michael Ostroff for the Canadian
Union of Postal Workers
377 Bank St., Ottawa ON K2P 1Y3,
\$10.00.

reviewed by Keith Jeworski

Many Rivers to Cross is the second video production by Michael Ostroff for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). In 1995 he completed *Memory and Muscle: The Postal Strike of 1965*, a documentary about the first postal strike since 1924.

The legacy of that strike was the introduction in 1967 of collective bargaining with the right to strike for federal public sector workers.

Many Rivers to Cross documents a nine-month period beginning with the start of contract negotiations at Canada Post in April 1997. It concludes in December 1997 when, for the fourth time since 1967, strikebreaking legislation was used against CUPW. Ostroff provides viewers with a fascinating behind the scenes look at collective bargaining in the post office. By effectively editing 80 hours of video and employ-

ing a bluesy soundtrack, he has crafted an entertaining and informative 94-minute documentary.

As we watch bargaining unfold, it becomes evident that the parties have interests that are diametrically opposed. Union negotiators are out to secure more full-time jobs by creating them from part-time and temporary hours. Canada Post wants \$200 million in cost reductions through concessions in work rules and job protections. We see the build up to the 16-day postal strike that began on November 19, 1997, preceded by an assault on the union's chief negotiator by Canada Post's negotiators in front of CBC reporter David McKay.

The video exposes how government policy and intervention sabotaged any possibility of a negotiated settlement. A leaked memo reveals that in August 1997 the minister for Canada Post assured the Canadian Direct Marketing Association that the government would end any strike and obtain roll-backs in the working conditions of postal workers. On December 4, 1997 back-to-work legislation ended the strike. The legislation imposed binding arbitration. A retired judge, without labour relations experience, was unilaterally appointed by the government to resolve the issues in dispute.

This arbitration process has, at the time of writing, been under way for close to 20 months. The imposed settlement may not be in place by the second anniversary of the 1997 strike. According to the legislation, the settlement will expire on July 31, 2000. A new round of negotiations is set to begin in May of next year. Down the road a sequel may be in order, possibly *Many Rivers to Cross II: The Workers Strike Back!*

Keith Jeworski is president of the CUPW Regina Local.



Say What??

Y2K

"About half of [American] doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes report that their billing and medical records computer systems have been fixed for Year 2000 operation, but fewer than a third said they had finished checking their bio-medical equipment, a federal survey released yesterday showed."

- From a column in The Washington Post called "Y2K," on efforts to correct computer problems that could wreak havoc at year's end.

GOOD OLD DAYS?

"I suspect the good old days were only old."

- Chris Axworthy.

In April this year, while he was a federal NDP MP, Axworthy made this remark about those who criticize the party for abandoning its socialist roots. Axworthy is currently the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Saskatchewan.

CONNECT THE DOTS...

"Connect the dots...If you were determined to destroy Capitalism...If you were convinced that humanity must be destroyed to 'Save the Earth,' then a supranational bureaucracy composed of unelected Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) composed of Greens would be the perfect instrument."

- Alan Caruba, a public relations "expert" for the chemical and pesticide industries in the U.S. On his website, he calls global warming the "biggest hoax of the decade."



SOME TOOL CHEST

"Biotechnology is simply another tool in the breeders' tool chest for increasing the diversity of their breeding lines to produce plentiful, high-quality food for our tables."

- David T. Dennis, president and CEO of Performance Plants in Kingston, Ontario. Dennis wrote this in his article titled "Why GM foods aren't so scary" in the Comment column of the Financial Post, October 25, 1999.

VOTE FOR ME

"Women make the best cooks and housewives and should be encouraged in that role."

- Bill Vander Zalm, former premier of B.C. and current B.C. Reform Party candidate for an upcoming provincial by-election.

Big Brother

If Mike Harris gets his way and issues every citizen of Ontario with a universal provincial ID card, it could result in a society predicted by George Orwell.

by Paul Bobier

Call it the Mike Harris ID card. Don't leave home without it, or else.

After all the negative public opinions, newspaper editorials, and the privacy commissioner's warnings during his first term in power, Ontario's re-elected premier still pursues a pet project to destroy privacy and civil liberties in the name of fraud control and efficiency. The universal provincial ID card, a concept considered and rejected in Quebec and British Columbia, has been quietly planned behind closed doors at Queen's Park with the cooperation of information technology companies.

Harris's Progressive Conservatives can't claim they informed voters of their plans for biometrics-based, universal ID cards during the 1999 provincial election. The PC Party's campaign brochure promised a smart (micro-chip) health card for storing medical and drug information, but avoided mentioning using finger-scans, retina-scans or palm-scans as the means for identifying people. The PC election platform said nothing about combining provincial licences, birth certificates, and health cards into a single, multi-purpose ID card. Most probably, the PC hierarchy felt they'd lose votes in 1999 by fully revealing their Big Brother plans, so they showed only some of their cards during the campaign and waited until the throne

speech to tell us their real intentions.

Biometric identification of Ontario residents and universal ID cards (as the only way to access provincial services) were therefore never approved by the electorate, and it's doubtful that voters in a free and democratic country would ever support these two concepts.

A universal ID card for any jurisdiction can quickly become an "internal passport" everyone must carry at all times - or else face arrest, fines or imprisonment. Under apartheid, black South Africans had to carry special passes, or face the legal consequences. In the former Soviet Union, the Communist government required every citizen to carry internal passports.

Even if Ontario law never specifies universal ID cards to be internal passports, law enforcement officers and civil servants could rely so much upon them that they informally become internal passports. Other cards for business or federal government purposes could be considered unacceptable ID by authorities in Ontario. If a universal card is lost or stolen, the individual becomes an absolute nobody to government, and could be treated accordingly.

Biometric ID (where a unique portion of one's anatomy is scanned to identify the person) has become big business, where companies try to persuade governments and banks to ap-

prove their retina-scan, finger-scan or palm-scan technology for positive ID of the public. Biometric ID is promoted as a security feature, but it remains a privacy intrusion to the public because a digitalized record of one's personal features always stays on record, for comparative purposes.

The Harris government advocated finger-scanning all Ontarians in mid-1997, and was publicly criticized for saying so. Its Social Assistance Reform Act gave municipal councils authority to digitally-fingerprint welfare recipients. Metropolitan Toronto Council (now the City of Toronto Council) voted for it in 1997, but held off on the practice after being accused of treating welfare recipients like criminals. By the same token, the provincial government would also be treating all Ontarians like criminals by biometrically identifying people for their licences, health care, birth certificates - or for any contact with police and government officials.

Paul Bobier is a freelance writer in Kitchener, Ontario. He is writing a book on privacy issues in Canada.

My Opinion does not necessarily represent the editorial views of Briarpatch. We welcome submissions and encourage any ensuing dialogue.



A national child care program. Now.



FACT: Research shows a major factor for success in school is a child's exposure to learning in the early years. Remedial education for children with poor early-learning environments is costing \$2.5 billion a year.

FACT: Only 1 of every 12 children who need child care has access to licensed child care spaces that offer early childhood education.

FACT: The federal government is running a surplus of up to \$10 billion. A national child care program would cost a fraction of that.

**It's time for Ottawa to bring in a
national child care program that recognizes the
value of quality child care to all of us.**

*Get on board The Child Care Express.
Write your MP via the CAW web site:
www.caw.ca.*

CAW  TCA
CANADA

TRY CONVINCING THIS GUY
THAT KEEPING
YOUR TOWN'S ARENA OPEN
IS MORE IMPORTANT
THAN HIS STOCK OPTIONS....

Make no mistake: corporations get involved in public services to turn a profit. Not to meet community needs.

That means citizens take a back seat to shareholders.

That's just one of the hidden costs of privatization. User fees rise. Services get cut. Local economies suffer. Jobs disappear. Lengthy leases and partnership deals cost more than publicly-financed and run projects – just ask an Auditor General.

Find out why
Public Works! best
for municipal services.
For more information visit
www.cupe.ca

Public!
WORKS!



A MESSAGE FROM THE PEOPLE WHO KEEP MUNICIPALITIES WORKING.
CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

02007



12